

## **STATIONERY ACCESSORY SYSTEM**

### **BACKGROUND OF INVENTION**

5           The present invention relates to stationery items, such as file folders and looseleaf dividers, report dividers or organizers having tabs. The invention relates to folders of the hanging type, as well as loose filing folders.

Conventional hanging folders 101 have plastic tabs 102 that can be positioned in plural, discreet positions along a top edge of the folder, as shown in Fig. 1. In  
10       conventional usage, shown in Fig. 2 hanging folders 101 are arrayed in a row, one behind the other, within a file drawer 201 having suitable supports 202. The plastic tabs 102 have wing portions 103 that are inserted into slots 104 disposed at each of the discrete positions. In order to make the tabs on folders further back in the file drawer visible, most users of such files stagger the positioning of the tabs for example  
15       in a sequence from left to right that repeats every three or five folders, or the like, as shown in the front portion 203 of the drawer 201 of Fig. 2. However, when the files need to be repositioned or when files need to be added or deleted from a file drawer, the pattern with which the tabs had previously been staggered is disrupted, leaving one or more tabs 205 further forward in the drawer, possibly obscuring one or more of  
20       the tabs 206 further back in the drawer, as shown in the back portion 204 of the drawer 201 of Fig. 2. The user must then remove the plastic tabs from positions at which they have been placed, and they must then be reattached to hanging folders at new positions, re-establishing the desired staggered pattern.

Conventional loose filing folders such as manila folders are often used to  
25       create subfiles, also referred to as inside folders, within hanging folders, or may be used in loose filing drawers or boxes of their own. Manila folders 301 are conventionally precut, usually with each having a tab at one of three or five staggered positions 302 along a top edge 303, as shown in Fig. 3. By selecting a sequence of folders where the tabs of one folder do not overlap the tab of an immediately  
30       succeeding folder, the tabs of each succeeding folder are made relatively more visible, as shown in the front portion 401 of the drawer of Fig. 4. However, as with the

hanging folders, when the filing system must be updated, or when individual file folders are replaced or changed the staggered pattern may be disrupted as shown in the back portion 402 of the drawer of Fig. 4. Again, a tab 403 further forward in the drawer may obscure a tab 404 further back in the drawer. Because the manila folders  
5 do not have repositionable /adjustable tabs, they are frequently discarded when changing the filing system or when the file tabs become damaged or tattered. In some cases adhesive labels may be applied over the tabs and new markings then made. While discarding manila folders that now have tabs in the wrong positions due to a rearrangement of the filing system is wasteful, relabeling and reusing folders is  
10 difficult and sloppy.

What is needed is an improved tab system for file folders, hanging file folders, looseleaf dividers, report dividers, organizers and the like.

#### SUMMARY OF INVENTION

15 According to aspects of an embodiment of the invention, a stationery accessory system comprises: a slidable tab; and a sheetlike member including a rail; one of the slidable tab and the rail having a channel defined along a longitudinal aspect thereof, the channel defined by a wall of the rail, and the channel having a longitudinal opening narrower than a width interior to the channel measured parallel  
20 to the longitudinal opening; and the other of the slidable tab and the rail having an expanded edge, the expanded edge having a width greater than the longitudinal opening such that the channel and the expanded edge are slidably engageable. In one variation of this embodiment, the rail is integral with the sheetlike member. In another variation the rail is permanently affixed to the sheetlike member. In yet  
25 another variation, the rail is removably affixed to the sheetlike material. In variations having an integral rail, the sheetlike member may comprise an extruded polymeric material. In variations having an extruded polymeric material, the rail may be a polymeric material co-extruded with the sheetlike member. According to any of these variations, the sheetlike member may comprise the top of or a wall of the file folder,  
30 hanging folder, notebook divider or organizer. According to aspects of another embodiment of the invention, a method of making a stationary accessory comprises:

extruding a length of sheet material having a rail along one edge thereof; extruding a length of tab material; dividing the length of tab material into individual tabs; and dividing the length of sheet material into individual sheets; wherein one of the tab and the rail have a channel defined along a longitudinal aspect thereof, the channel  
5 defined by a wall of the rail, and the channel having a longitudinal opening narrower than a width interior to the channel measured parallel to the longitudinal opening; and the other of the tab and the rail having a beaded edge, the bead having a width greater than the longitudinal opening such that the channel and the expanded edge are slidably engageable. The tabs may be interchangeable between the file folder,  
10 hanging folder, notebook divider or organizer. The tabs may be produced in varying lengths, sizes, shapes and colors enabling the user flexibility in developing their own filing system. Although useable in a system, together with file folders, hanging folders, notebook dividers, organizers or the like, the tabs are a separate and distinct component. According to a variation of this embodiment, extruding the length of  
15 sheet material comprises co-extruding the length of sheet material and the rail. According to another variation of this embodiment, the method further comprises affixing the rail to the extruded length of sheet material. Affixing may further comprise permanently attaching the rail or releasably attaching the rail.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings are not intended to be drawn to scale. In the drawings, each identical or nearly identical component that is illustrated in various figures is represented by a like numeral. For purposes of clarity, not every component may be labeled in every drawing. In the drawings:

25 FIG. 1 is a detailed view of the slot and tab attachment feature of a conventional hanging folder;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of conventional hanging folders stored in a row;

FIG. 3 is a detailed view of a conventional manila folder tab;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of conventional manila folders stores in a row;

30 FIG. 5 is a perspective view of an adjustable tab with a bead at the base of the tab;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of an adjustable tab with a channel at the base of the tab;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a tab slidably mounted to a sheetlike material according to aspects of an embodiment of the invention in which the tab includes a  
5 channel at the base of the tab;

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a tab slidably mounted to a sheetlike material according to aspects of an embodiment of the invention in which the tab includes a bead at the base of the tab;

FIG. 9 is a detailed view of a slide element according to aspects of the  
10 embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 10 is a detailed view of another slide element according to aspects of another embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 11 is a detailed view of an attachment aspect of an embodiment of the invention;

15 FIG. 12 is a detailed view of an integrated rail according to aspects of yet another embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 13 is a detail showing detents according to aspects of an embodiment of the invention; and

20 FIG. 14 is a detail showing detents according to aspects of another embodiment of the invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

This invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in  
25 the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways. Also, the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting. The use of "including," "comprising," or "having," "containing", "involving", and variations thereof herein, is meant to encompass the items listed thereafter and  
30 equivalents thereof as well as additional items.

Various aspects of exemplary embodiments of the present invention are now described in connection with Figs. 5-14. These embodiments include a tab and a sheetlike member to which the tab attaches. The tab and sheetlike member have a slidably engageable construction including a channel formed in one and a  
5 corresponding projecting rim, lip or bead formed in the other. The tab is slidable from one extreme position at or near one end the sheetlike member to another extreme position at or near the other end of the sheetlike member. The position of the tab is preferably infinitely adjustable between the two extreme positions. In addition to the infinite adjustability between the two extreme positions, the construction may include  
10 detent positions or high friction positions that tend to hold the tab in such preferred or predetermined positions along the track.

The features of the exemplary embodiment are now described in connection with Figs. 5 – 14.

According to aspects of one embodiment of the invention shown in Fig. 5, a  
15 tab 501 has an enlarged feature, referred to hereinafter without loss of generality as a bead 502, disposed along a lower edge. As will be explained below, bead 502 engages with a channel constructed in a stationery article to receive bead 502.

According to aspects of another embodiment of the invention shown in Fig. 6, a tab 601 has a channel 602 disposed along a lower edge. As will also be explained  
20 below, channel 602 engages with an enlarged feature constructed on a stationery article to receive channel 602.

As shown in Fig. 7, a tab 601 according to other aspects of the invention rides a track 702 running A-A along an edge of the sheetlike member 703. The sheetlike member 703 may be a file folder, a loose-leaf divider, a report divider, or the like.  
25 Track 702 includes an enlarged feature 701 which is engaged by the channel 602 of tab 601. The enlarged feature 701 is hereafter referred to as a bead 701, without loss of generality to other forms of projecting rim or lip.

As shown in Fig. 8, a tab 501 according to aspects of the invention rides a track 802 running B-B along an edge of the sheetlike member 803. The sheetlike  
30 member 803 may be a file folder, a looseleaf divider, a report divider, or the like. Track 802 includes a channel 801 which is engaged by the bead 502 of tab 501.

The detail of Fig. 9 shows aspects of one embodiment of the tab and track configuration. In this embodiment, the tab 601 includes a channel 602 along a bottom edge 903, thereof. The track, or rail, has a projecting rim, lip or a beaded or enlarged feature 701 running along the edge of the sheetlike member 703. The channel 602 of the tab 601 engages with the bead 701 of the sheetlike member 703. The channel 602 and bead 701 may engage with a slidable friction fit, or may engage loosely, except at points where detent features hold the tab in place, as explained below. Shoulder contact region 906 defines an opening to the channel 602 that is narrower than the bead 701, so as to retain the bead 701 within the channel 602 against radial forces.

According to aspects of an alternative embodiment, as shown in Fig. 10, the tab 501 may have the bead 502 while the track or rail 802 has a channel 801 which engages the bead 502 of the tab 501. Shoulder contact region 1005 defines an opening to the channel 801 that is narrower than the bead 502, so as to retain the bead 502 within the channel 801 against radial forces.

In the embodiments of Figs. 9 and 10, there should preferably also be a feature that maintains the tab in a vertical or other desired fixed, predetermined angle relative to the sheetlike member. For example, the channel (Fig. 9, 602; Fig. 10, 801) may include a sufficiently broad shoulder contact region (Fig. 9, 906; Fig. 10, 1005) that the tab is maintained at its correct position. Any other suitable feature may be used.

Preferably, the rail runs the entire length of one edge of the sheetlike material, but a shorter rail is also contemplated. The rail should be of a length sufficient to provide substantial mobility of the tab along the edge of the sheetlike member.

Also preferred is either that the channel have a slight flair at the ends or that the bead have a slight taper at the ends thereof so as to facilitate the insertion of the bead into the channel from one end or the other thereof.

As shown in Fig. 11 the rail 1101 may be a separate component, attached to the sheetlike material 1102, for example adhesively. In this embodiment, the rail 1101 has wings 1103 coated with an adhesive 1104 on one side 1105 which are then folded down C into contact with the sheetlike material 1102.

Alternatively, as shown in Fig. 12 the rail 1201 may be fully integrated with the sheetlike material 1202. For example, the sheetlike material and rail can be a

single extrusion of a polymeric material. Alternatively, the sheetlike material may be an extruded lamination including a core material, for example, card stock or the like and an outer material, for example an extruded polymer from which the rail is also formed integral with the completed article.

5           As shown in Fig. 12, there are preferably handholds 1203 or reinforced areas adjacent to the rail that facilitate moving the tab from one side to the other. The user grips a handhold in one hand and the tab in the other and then can slide the tab away from the handhold. The handholds reinforce the area of greatest stress on the rail, so as to also prevent tears during movement of the tab.

10           Using any suitable technique, the channel may be formed to have detents as shown in Fig. 13 or the channel and rail may be formed with cooperative elements comprising detents as shown in Fig. 14. In the embodiment as shown in Fig. 13, when the tab 1301 is slid to a position between raised portions 1302, 1303, the tab 1301 is then securely held in place by the raised portions 1302, 1303. If it is desired  
15 to place the tab 1301 at a position other than the detent location, the tab may be left resting on one of the raised portions also. The detent illustrated in Fig. 14 holds the tab 1401 in place by cooperation between the notch 1402 in the bead 1403 and raised portions 1404 in the channel 1405. As with the detent as shown in Fig. 13 the tab may be positioned other than at a detent position, and left in place, if so desired.

20           Although no detents are required, if an interference fit is designed, instead, the tolerance of the diameters of the bead and channel can be set so as to prevent tabs from sliding off of the rail or from fitting so tightly as to be difficult to move.

          Other variations are also possible. According to aspects of yet another embodiment of the invention, the tab may include at its base a bead having a raised rib  
25 positioned crosswise, approximately at the center of the bead. The raised rib would enable the user to select a location for the tab along a predetermined number of slots along the channel. According to aspects of yet another embodiment of the invention, the tab and/or the channel may contain ribs running either longitudinally or crosswise, increasing the friction between the bead of the tab and channel. For example, ribs  
30 such as 1302, 1303 of Fig. 13 can be spaced closely together, so as not to form detent

positions, but rather to simply locally increase the friction between the tab 1301 and the channel.

Because the tabs can be extruded of a polymeric material and then cut to length, or alternatively molded of a polymeric material, they are particularly  
5 compatible with peelable labels. The peelable labels can be provided in sheets for laser or inkjet printing. The tabs can also be provided with a textured surface suitable for accepting permanent marker inks or the like.

Having thus described several aspects of at least one embodiment of this invention, it is to be appreciated various alterations, modifications, and improvements  
10 will readily occur to those skilled in the art. Such alterations, modifications, and improvements are intended to be part of this disclosure, and are intended to be within the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing description and drawings are by way of example only.

What is claimed is:

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